

Butt Valley Dam, Gate Tender's Barn  
Butt Valley Reservoir Road  
Caribou Vicinity  
Plumas County  
California

HAER No. CA-189-B

HAER  
CAL  
38-CARBOU  
1B-

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California

HAER  
CAL  
32-CARBUV,  
1B-

**HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD**  
**BUTT VALLEY DAM GATE TENDER'S BARN**  
**HAER No. CA-189-B**

**Location:** Butt Valley Dam  
Butt Valley Reservoir Road  
Caribou vicinity  
Plumas County, California

U.S.G.S.: Caribou, 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle, 1979  
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10 657990 E, 4441850 N

**Date of Construction:** 1910s (estimated); move to current location by 1922-23

**Builder:** Unknown

**Present Owner And Occupant:** Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)  
77 Beale Street  
San Francisco, California 94106

**Present Use:** Storage

**Significance:** Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's Barn was built in the early days of dam construction at Butt Valley and was then part of a town site known as Camp 5. Due to later dam construction and the rising waters of the Butt Valley reservoir, the barn was moved to its current location south of the Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's House. Although simple and typical in design, the barn is one of the oldest standing structures associated with the era of hydroelectric development in Butt Valley.

**Report Prepared by:** Mary L. Maniery and Tracy D. Bakic  
Cultural Resource Specialists  
PAR Environmental Services, Inc.  
1906 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
Sacramento, California 95816

**Date:** November 1997

## **I. DESCRIPTION**

Located in Plumas County, California, the Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's Barn is situated on a rise above the dam and is located southeast of the Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's House, which overlooks the southwest edge of Butt Lake. The barn has a south-facing primary facade and is set on a gentle, almost flat, slope amongst large pine trees. It is part of a small residential complex that also includes the gate tender's house and a shed (see HAER Nos. CA-189-A and CA-189-C for information about the house and shed).

The barn was probably built sometime in the 1910s during the early days of Butt Valley dam construction associated with the development of North Fork Feather River hydroelectric power. The large two-story rectangular barn was erected using construction methods and materials typical of the period. The barn is depicted on construction photographs taken of the area around 1921. It was salvaged and moved from its original location, at a point east of the Butt Valley dam spillway, to its current location by 1922-23, approximately the same time the reservoir was raised and the gate tender's house was built.

At its current location, the barn is cut into a slope and is partially elevated on concrete piers. Stone steps cut into the slope lead north from the barn toward the associated gate tender's house.

The barn is in fair condition considering its age. The windows have been broken, the original roof surface has likely been replaced, and many wood siding members are in a state of disrepair.

## **II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

The Butt Valley Gate Tender's Barn is an approximately 46-foot-six-inch by 30-foot wood frame structure, has a gable roof that is surfaced with corrugated-metal sheets and is partially elevated on a foundation structure of concrete piers. The north and south gable ends have fly rafters (CA-189-B-1, CA-189-B-3). The eaves at the east and west sides of the barn have exposed rafters. A remnant of a hay hook protrudes from the south gable end peak (CA-189-B-1). The barn is sided with vertical wood boards that each measure eight inches wide by one inch thick on the front (south) facade and between four inches and six inches wide by one inch thick on all other sides. Ceramic insulators are hanging from the front (south) facade (CA-189-B-1).

Fenestration is symmetrical on all sides. The front (south) facade consists of a large wood door that slides from its top on a metal track. A small pedestrian door is located in the middle of the wood sliding door. A six-foot-tall double hayloft door is located on the second story

level above the wood sliding door tracks. Each of the hayloft doors swings outward and is attached to the outside of the barn with large metal hinges. A rectangular, double-hung, wood sash window is located above the hayloft doors. This window originally had six-light over six-light glazing; currently, two vertical muntins remain in place. The glass has been broken and is no longer in place (CA-189-B-1).

The north side consists of a wood pedestrian door at the first floor level, a double, hinged hayloft door and a six-over-six double-hung window, one above the other (CA-189-B-3). The east and west sides of the barn each contain four evenly-spaced, square windows (CA-189-B-2, CA-189-B-4). These windows each have a single sash with plain, unadorned sills and surrounds. Originally the windows each consisted of six-light glazing. Most of the windows are missing the glass panes, although many of the muntins remain in place.

The interior of the barn has wood plank flooring and a first-level ceiling height of approximately 10 feet, 6 inches. The east side of the barn's first level interior is divided into six small stalls, each measuring about five feet wide by 10 feet deep, and a larger stall in the southeast corner that measures 10 feet by 10 feet (CA-189-B-5, CA-189-B-6, CA-189-B-7). A tack room with wood lined interior walls is located in the southwest corner of the first floor and measures about 12 feet by 10 feet (CA-189-B-5). The tack room is accessed through a paneled wood door with single-light glazing at its upper portion. The northwest corner of the first floor includes chicken cages (CA-189-B-6). The remainder of the first floor is open (see attached first floor plan of barn). The second floor consists of a large open hayloft and is accessed from the center of the barn through a trap door. Porcelain knob and tube wiring is evident throughout the barn's interior (CA-189-B-5, CA-189-B-6).

### **III. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

The exact construction date of the Butt Valley Gate Tender's Barn is unknown, but it is likely that it was built sometime in the 1910s during the early days of Butt Valley dam construction associated with the development of North Fork Feather River hydroelectric power (see HAER No. CA-189 for contextual history of the hydroelectric system and Butt Valley Dam).

In 1902, the WPC began developing a hydroelectric system on the North Fork of the Feather River in Plumas County, California. The original system was designed to create two reservoirs; Lake Almanor and Butt Lake. Together they would provide a year-round water supply to power plants on the Feather River. After some initial construction, work was stalled until WPC was reincorporated in 1906 as the GWP (WPC 1902:n.p.; Wickman 1972:30).

As the demand for electricity surged during the 1910s, GWP made plans to expand their power generation capacities. They built a small dam and power plant at Butt Valley to generate

power for the hydraulic sluicing used to create Almanor Dam. Water from Lake Almanor was fed by tunnel to Butt Valley to the southwest. By 1911, GWP had nearly 100 men working in the valley, 30 of whom had their families in residence there (Wickman 1972:30).

To accommodate GWP workers, a Butt Valley town site known as Camp 5 was born and included a barn for workhorses, a hospital, a schoolhouse, a hotel and a series of cottages (Kramar 1963:11-12, 19).

The demand for electricity continued to grow during the 1910s. The firm of Stone and Webster was hired from 1919 to 1921 to build the Caribou Powerhouse downstream from Lake Almanor and to improve the Butt Lake storage capacity and dam. Further improvements to the dam in 1923 would eventually raise the reservoir to a level that covered the site of Camp 5, including the area where the Butt Valley Gate Tender's Barn was originally located (Mardel 1933:n.p.; Shoup and Cornford 1987:15, 17).

In 1923, the GWP hired Neils Schultz of the Schultz Construction Company of San Francisco to raise Butt Valley Dam to ensure a continued supply of water to Caribou. Many families left the valley with these improvements. Cottages, barns, the local school and a hotel were salvaged and burned. One of the barns was moved from the area to be covered by the rising reservoir to be resituated south of a newly built gate tender's house and is now known as the Butt Valley Gate Tender's Barn. GWP gate tender Ben Goon and his family moved into the new house and were the first to make use of the barn at its new location (Kramar 1963:19; Quadrio 1996) (see HAER No. CA-189-A for more information about Ben Goon and the gate tender's house).

The barn was probably used by subsequent GWP and later PG&E employees who resided and worked at the gate tender's complex, which also included a small shed to the southwest of the house. The barn, along with the rest of the complex, is now vacant and is owned by PG&E of California.

#### **IV. SOURCES**

##### **A. Architectural Drawings:**

No original architectural drawings for the building could be located at PG&E archives, headquarters or field offices.

## **B. Historic Maps and Views:**

The Chester Museum has one historical photograph of the barn taken circa 1921 around the time that it was moved to its current location. This photograph was not available for duplication.

Anonymous

1933 Map depicting Butt Valley Dam and associated elements including the gate tender's house, shed, and bam. On file, PG&E, San Francisco, California.

## **C. Interviews:**

Quadrio, Marilyn

1996 Telephone communication with Mary Maniery, PAR Environmental Services, Inc., April 30, 1996.

## **D. Bibliography:**

Kramar, D. Glenn

1963 "Activities in the Butt Creek Area, From 1910 to 1921." In *Plumas Memories*, Plumas County Historical Society Publication No. 11, April 7, 1963. On file, Special Collections, Meriam Library, CSU Chico.

Mardel, C. M.

1933 *Great Western Power Company of California: History and Data* by C. M. Mardel. On file, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Francisco.

Shoup, Laurence H. and Daniel Cornford

1987 *The Caribou I Powerhouse: An Historic Overview and National Register of Historic Places Evaluation*. Prepared for Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Francisco.

Western Power Company (WPC)

1902 *Report of Construction at the End of October, 1902*. Western Power Company, Prattville. On file, WRCA, University of California, Berkeley.

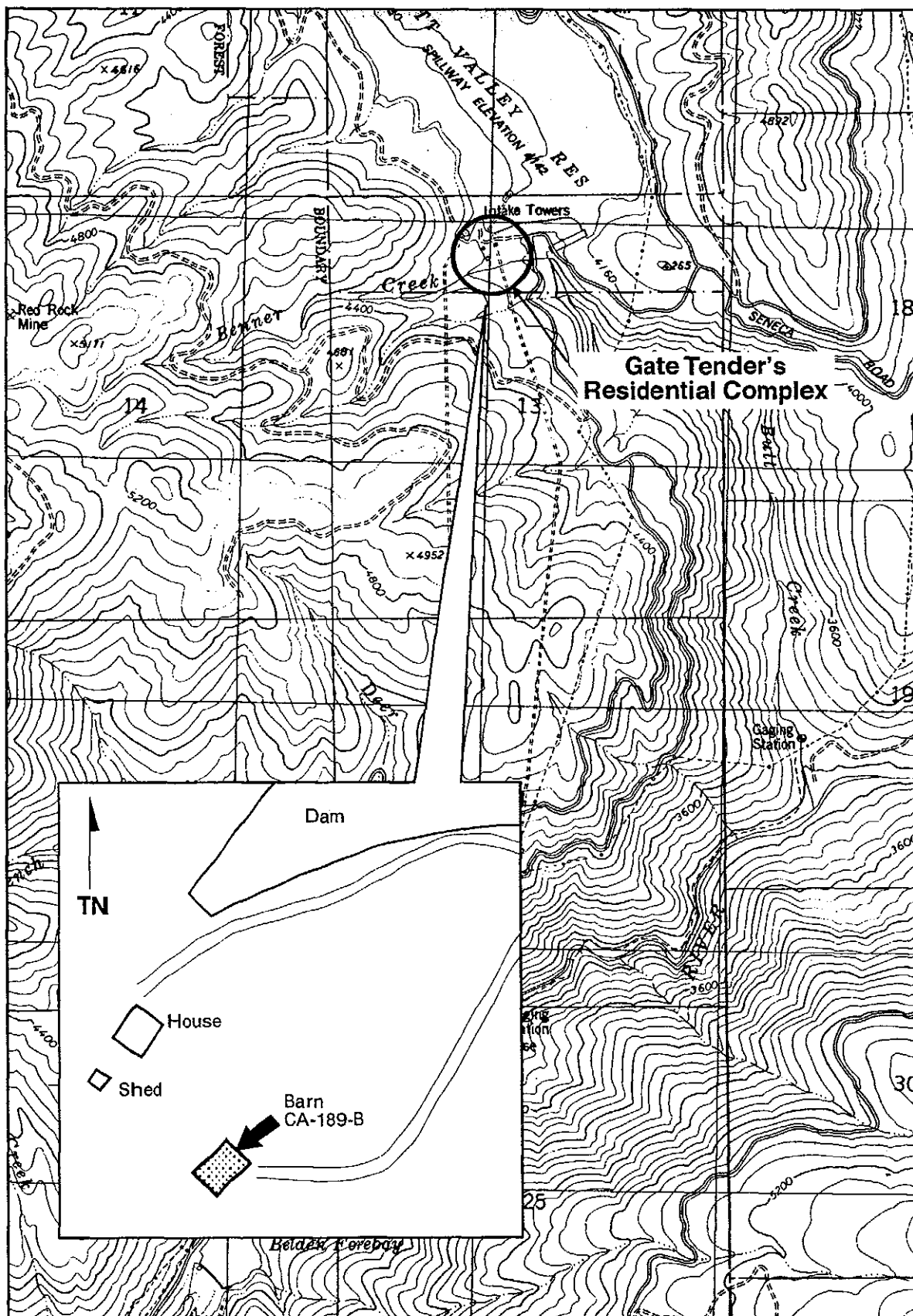
Wickman, Bill Herman

1972 *Man on the Lake Almanor Basin: A Study in Environmental Modification*. Thesis, Chico State College. On file, Special Collections, Meriam Library, California State University, Chico.

## PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

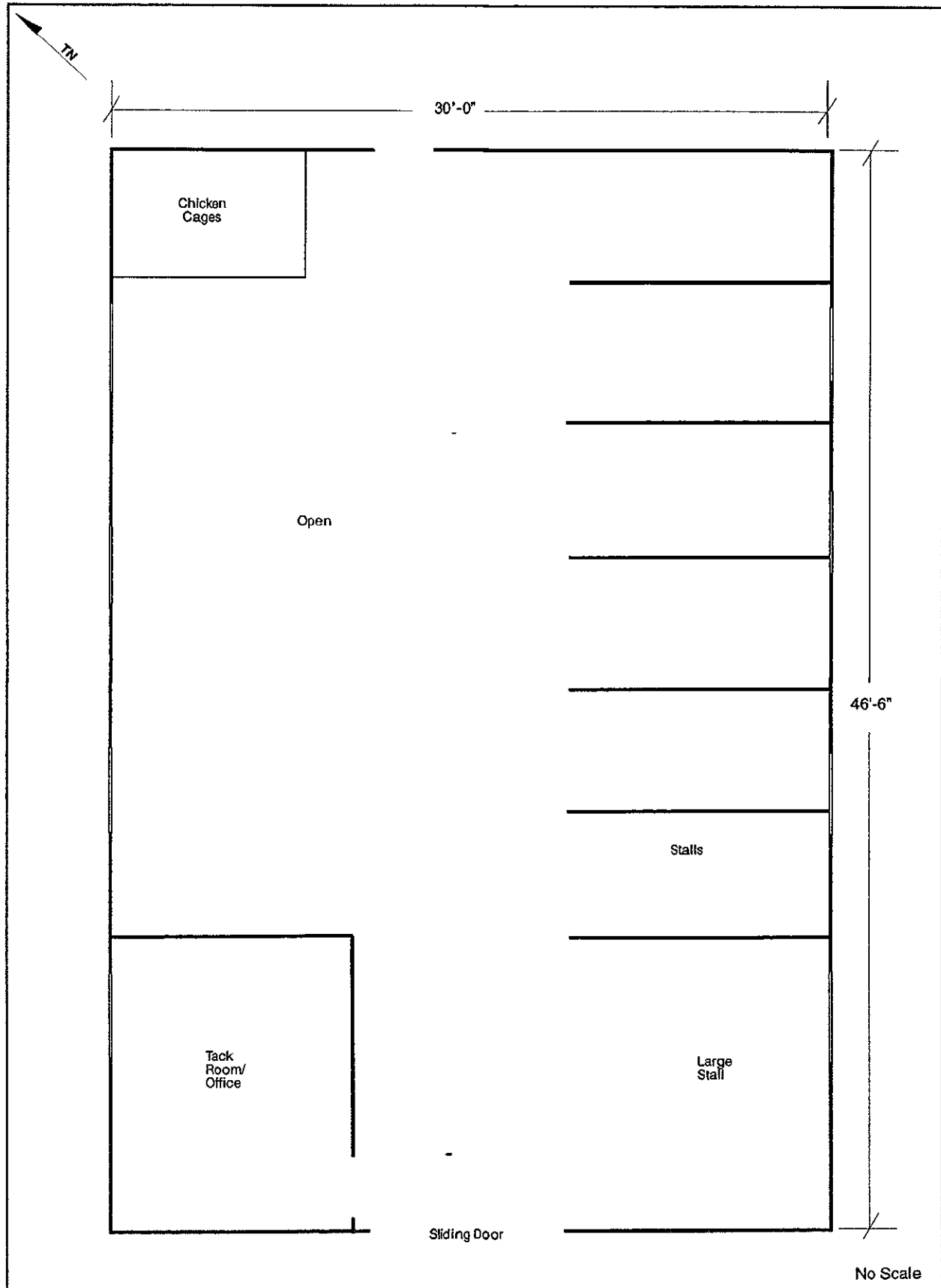
The Butt Valley Gate Tender's Barn is part of a small complex of buildings owned by PG&E near the company's dam at Butt Valley Reservoir. PG&E is currently seismically retrofitting the Butt Valley Dam and intends to remove the barn. PG&E is recording the barn according to the HABS/HAER standards, and is filing documents with the State of California Office of Historical Preservation and the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California. This recordation has been prepared to meet those stipulations.

This report was compiled by Tracy D. Bakic with historical text prepared by Cindy L. Baker, Historian and architectural descriptions prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian. Floor plans were drafted in the field by Blossom Hamusek and were drawn by Claire Warshaw. The preceding are all employees of PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California. Documentation is based on previous investigations conducted by PAR Environmental Services entitled *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation of Butt Valley Dam, North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric System, Plumas County, California* (1996), and *State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Record Form and Building, Structure, and Object Record Form for PG&E Building 3869/Butt Valley Gate Tender's House* (1996).



Location Map and Site Plan (Inset) of Butt Valley Dam Gate Tender's Barn  
(USGS: Caribou, CA, 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle 1979)





**First Floor Plan of Barn**  
(Field Drawing by Blossom Hamusek and Final Drawing by Claire Warshaw, 1996)